

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-10 OMB-01 TRSE-00

ACDA-05 CIEP-01 /088 W

----- 035102

R 081622Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5420

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 15517

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: MAJOR LEFT-RIGHT BATTLE IN BRITAIN'S SECOND

LARGEST UNION - THE ENGINEERS

REF: LONDON 7707

SUMMARY - ONCE AGAIN, MEMBERS OF BRITAIN'S SECOND LARGEST
AND MOST VOLATILE UNION -- THE ENGINEERING SECTION OF
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THE AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS (AUEW) --

ARE BEING POLLED IN STILL ANOTHER CRUCIAL ELECTION FOR KEY POSTS. AND ONCE AGAIN, MODERATES ARE FIGHTING LEFT-WINGERS IN THREE CRITICAL BATTLES FOR POSITIONS ON THE UNION'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND FOR OTHER POSTS. THE VOTE IS BY POSTAL BALLOT, WHICH HAVE BEEN SENT OUT TO MEMBERS, AND MUST BE RETURNED BY OCTOBER 23, AFTER WHICH THE RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED. THE OUTCOME OF THESE ELECTIONS WILL AFFECT THE POLITICAL BALANCE WITHIN THE AUEW. END SUMMARY.

1. ONE OF THE THREE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS INVOLVES THE SEAT FOR SCOTLAND WHERE THE COMBINED EXTREME LEFT -- COMMUNIST PARTY (CP), INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS (ISP) AND WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (WRP) -- ARE EXPECTED TO GIVE THEIR COMBINED SUPPORT TO WELL-KNOWN COMMUNIST JIMMY REID (WHO LED THE UPPER CLYDE SHIPBUILDERS' SIT-IN FOUR YEARS AGO), AGAINST GAVIN LAIRD, A GLASGOW REGIONAL OFFICER. LAIRD IS A STAUNCH MODERATE WHO HAS THE STRONG BACKING OF THE MODERATE JOHN BOYD FORCES. HUGH SCANLON, AUEW PRESIDENT SUPPORTS REID AND HAS BEEN CAMPAIGNING FOR HIM. (THIS SEAT, IN FACT WAS ONE MADE VACANT WHEN BOYD BECAME AUEW GENERAL SECRETARY.) A SECOND SEAT, COVERING THE NORTH WEST BUT ALSO INCLUDING IRELAND, WILL PIT, PRINCIPALLY, THE LEFT'S CANDIDATE PETER BRAMAH AGAINST MODERATE HARRY BANKS FOR A SEAT TO BE VACATED BY A MODERATE, A. L. HEARSEY. A THIRD SEAT, COVERING MAN-CHESTER AND THE MIDLANDS, INVOLVES A BATTLE BETWEEN THE LEFT'S CANDIDATE INCUMBENT BOB WRIGHT, WHOM BOYD DEFEATED FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARSHIP, AGAINST MODERATE TERRY DUFFY. OTHER LEFT-RIGHT BATTLES WILL TAKE PLACE FOR THE AUEW ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARSHIP, FOR A NATIONAL ORGANIZER, SETERAL DIVISIONAL ORGANIZERS, ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ORGANIZERS, AND DISTRICT SECRETARIES IN VARIOUS AREAS AROUND THE COUNTRY.

2. ALTHOUGH THE OTHER CONTESTS ARE BY NO MEANS UNIMPORTANT THE THREE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS ARE EVEN MORE CRITICAL BECAUSE OF THE TIGHT POLITICAL BALANCE BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT WHICH ALREADY EXISTS ON THE SEVEN MAN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE AUEW, CURRENTLY DIVIDED 3-3 WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ONE SEAT VACANT (BOYD'S - WHO HAD TO GIVE UP HIS SEAT
ON THE EXECUTIVE WHEN HE WON THE GENERAL SECRETARSHIP).
JOHN BOYD TOLD US THAT HE IS CONFIDENT THAT HIS CANDIDATE,
GAVIN LAIRD, WILL DEFEAT THE COMMUNIST JIMMY REID, AND
IN FACT LAIRD IS THE BETTORS' FAVORITE. THE WRIGHT-DUFFY
ELECTION OUTCOME IS LESS CERTAIN, BUT IF WRIGHT LOSES IT
WILL BE A SEVERE BLOW TO THE LEFT, SINCE IT WOULD BE THE
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SECOND SUCH DEFEAT WITHIN A YEAR FOR WRIGHT AND WOULD CERTAINLY DAMPEN, IF NOT DESTROY, THE EXTREME LEFT'S AMBITION TO HAVE WRIGHT SUCCEED HUGH SCANLON TO THE UNION'S KEY POST WHEN THE LATTER RETIRES IN ABOUT TWO YEARS' TIME. THE OUTCOME OF THE THIRD KEY ELECTION IS ALSO UNCERTAIN.

3. THE AUEW'S ENGINEERING SECTION IS THE OVERWHELMINGLY LARGEST OF THE FOUR SECTIONS OF THE UNION (WITH OVER 1.2 MILLION OF THE OVER 1.4 MILLION FOR THE AUEW AS A WHOLE). ON SEVERAL RECENT OCCASIONS, CRITICAL DECISIONS WITHIN THE AUEW INCLUDING THOSE AFFECTING ITS LEFT-RIGHT BALANCE, HAVE BEEN DECIDED BY THE CASTING VOTE OF HUGH SCANLON WHO HAS LARGEY TENDED TO SIDE WITH THE LEFT-WING. THE AUEW EXPRESSED ITS STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-INFLATION POLICY AT THE RECENT TUC CONGRESS (A POSITION SCANLON REITERATED LAST WEEK DURING THE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE). A SHARP SWING TO THE LEFT ON THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL COULD BE IMPORTANT, ALTHOUGH NOT PERHAPS DECISIVE, IN TERMS OF WHETHER THE AUEW WILL ACQUIESCE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PAY LIMIT. THIS IS OF COURSE THE KEY CURRENT ISSUE BUT THERE ARE MANY OTHERS DEALING WITH NATIONAL ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL POLICIES IN WHICH THE AUEW POSITION IS INFLUENTIAL.

SPIERS

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